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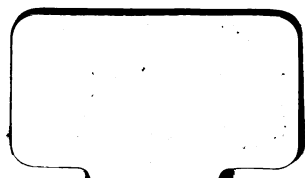
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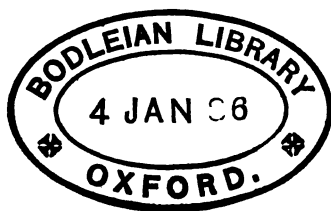
THE
COTTAGERS OF GLENCARRAN

BY
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THE COTTAGERS OF GLENCARRAN.

CHAPTER I.

THE LITTLE SEED.



“MARY,” said Joe Foster, looking up from his Bible, which he had been poring over intently for nearly half-an-hour, “gi’e me the baby, an’ do you tak’ the book and help me wi’ these questions. Mr Johnson will be nearly at the church by this time, an’ he doesna like us to be late.”

“You’ll have to find your next questions earlier in the week, Joe, I’m thinking,” replied Mary. She set the baby on its father’s knee, and taking the book and paper out of Joe’s hand, she began

to consider the question, and mark the texts of Scripture which were an answer to it. "There, Joe, it's not so very hard after all. I've marked all the verses. Your cap and handkerchief are on the bed; don't be late. I wish I was going with you."

Joe was shutting the door behind him when little Jenny, his eldest child, woke up, and cried that "dadda" must not go without kissing her. Of course he had to come back and cover the small glowing face and curly head with kisses; but at last he was really off, saying he knew he was very late.

Mary was a happy, thankful woman, as she sat thinking that Sabbath evening. She gave God thanks that Joe was becoming so earnest about religion; for she remembered how little interest it had for him a few years ago. When they were first married, a very slight excuse would have kept him at home the whole Sabbath; and although he used to read her a few verses every night, she feared that he did so more to please her than from any higher motive. Now, to her great joy, he had joined their minister's

Bible class ; and it was a stern necessity indeed that could keep him away from either morning or evening service. It was pleasant to see him taking delight in these things ; but it was best of all to see that religion was beginning to influence his life and conduct. Mary attributed this happy change (under God's blessing) to Mr Johnson's teaching. She was too humble-minded to imagine that she had anything to do with it.

Mary, however, had influenced her husband for good ; but in order to tell you how this was, I must go back about three years in her history.

Joe and Mary had been engaged more than a year, before they were able to marry. Mary was a servant in Mr Johnson's family for a great many years. Her chief business had been attending upon Miss Johnson, an invalid, who was always confined to bed, and depended for everything upon her faithful maid, to whom she was very much attached. The sick lady spent a great deal of time in working for the poor. She and Mary were generally employed in this way when Mr Johnson (having finished his parish

work for the day) came to spend his evenings in his daughter's room. Mary's mind expanded greatly while she listened to their conversation upon all high and holy themes. That quiet chamber became a school to her, in which she learned lessons of faith and patience—valuable lessons, worth learning at any price!

When Joe and Mary first found out that they cared for one another, Miss Johnson seemed to be sinking very fast; and Mary told Joe that she could not bear to leave her then, and that he must wait till she had done her duty by the mistress who had been like a mother to her.

Mary has not forgotten the day when she told Miss Johnson of her engagement, and promised that she would not leave her while she lived. The memory of joys and sorrows which have come to her since then has grown faint and dim; but she has not forgotten Miss Johnson's warm kiss, nor her grateful tears, as she bade God bless her and the husband of her choice.

During the last year of her life, the sick lady was often at death's door, and rallied again. When she was well enough, she used to gather

the village children round her bed, and hear them repeat hymns and Scripture verses about Jesus and his happy heavenly home. It was Mary's breast that supported the dying Christian when she drew her last breath in this troublesome world; her hand that closed the eyes which had done with weeping—whose next look would rest upon the Lord Jesus coming in the clouds.

About two months after her mistress's death, Mary was married. The evening before her wedding-day, Mr Johnson sent for her to his study. She found him sitting at the fire, and he bade her sit down opposite him, for he had a great deal to say to her. He thanked her for the care she had taken of his poor child, and told her that his prayers and blessing should accompany her to her new home; and he made her both glad and sorry by giving her some books which Miss Johnson had been in the habit of reading, her little work-box and her clothes, which he said he had rather Mary wore than any one else.

But she cried very bitterly when he produced

a pretty blue muslin dress, a white shawl, and a bonnet which Miss Johnson had trimmed for Mary with her own hands, and had requested her father to give her upon her wedding-day.

"But there must be no tears to-morrow, Mary," said the kind old man; "so I thought it better to give you these to-night. I hope you will wear your pretty dress with pleasure. Do you know what dress my Clara is wearing now?"

Mary's sobs hindered her reply, so Mr Johnson answered for her: "It is the robe of Christ's righteousness. Yes," he murmured, "that was the dress in which my darling entered her King's court. Mary, it is an ample, stainless robe—a complete covering. God grant you and I may have it for ours!"

Mr Johnson kept Mary in the study and talked to her until she became quite tranquil. He gave her a great deal of advice about her married life.

"I do not think," said he, "that Joe has quite decided whose servant he will be. Remember, a great deal rests with you. You may be able

to win him gently to the service of Christ ; but in order to do so, my dear child, you will have to be very careful of your own conduct. You must show him that a Christian woman makes the most obedient wife, the most cheerful and contented companion, and the kindest neighbour. True religion has nothing gloomy about it. Show your husband all this, and you will make him honour the faith you profess."

Mary had borne the good clergyman's counsel in mind, and had earnestly striven to act upon it. She certainly had not talked much about religion to Joe ; but he soon began to respect the power which made her yielding and sweet-tempered. He soon honoured the holy Book and holy day, which Mary so greatly valued. When they were first married, he could not but observe that Mary suffered nothing to keep her from church, or to interfere with the time she spent in prayer, night and morning, at home. So he grew to respect Christ's religion. That was the first step he took in the narrow path.

Mary thought over all this that quiet Sabbath evening, while she sat near the hearth with baby

on her lap, and little Jenny playing on the floor by her side. Presently the sweet church bell began to ring, and she could not help regretting that she was unable to obey its summons. However, she recollected that her duty as clearly kept her at home *now*, as it had formerly led her to worship in God's house ; and when the little ones were put to sleep, she spent a peaceful, happy hour in communion with her Lord.

Meanwhile Mr Johnson was in his well-lighted vestry-room, surrounded by his class. " His children " he liked to call them, although most of them had reached man's and woman's estate. He had held them in his arms at the font, and prayed that they might " have power and strength to have victory, and to triumph, against the devil, the world, and the flesh." He had taught them ever since, and believed he had reason to hope that some of them were now his fellow-pilgrims Zionwards, and would be his friends for ever. O happy Christian friendship! Happy people who love in Christ! You are bound together by the only tie which death cannot sever!

The question Mr Johnson's class had to answer was the following : "What blessings are promised in Scripture to those who speak to their neighbours about Christ?" Joe's verses (thanks to Mary) were quite correct. They were—

Mal. iii. 16, 17 : "Then they that feared the Lord spake often one to another : and the Lord hearkened, and heard it, and a book of remembrance was written before Him for them that feared the Lord, and that thought upon his name. And they shall be mine, saith the Lord of hosts, in that day when I make up my jewels; and I will spare them, as a man spareth his own son that serveth him."

Col. iii. 16 : "Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom ; teaching and admonishing one another in psalms, and hymns, and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord."

Dan. xii. 3 : "They that be wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament ; and they that turn many to righteousness as the stars for ever and ever."

Eccles. xi. 6: "In the morning sow thy seed, and in the evening withhold not thine hand; for thou knowest not whether shall prosper, either this or that, or whether they both shall be alike good."

Prov. xi. 25, 30: "The liberal soul shall be made fat; and he that watereth others shall be watered also himself." "He that winneth souls is wise."

Mr Johnson spoke at some length upon all these verses. He reminded his pupils that their first duty was to care for their own salvation, then for that of others; and referred them to the example of Matthew the publican, who, as soon as he was called to be a disciple, made a feast for Jesus, and invited his fellow-publicans to meet Him, and hear from His Divine lips those glad tidings which had just been made known to himself.

"There are some of you, my children," said the minister, "who have found a dear Saviour: don't you want others to find Him too? Have you found ease and calm in letting the burden of your sins fall down at the foot of His cross,

and do you not wish your friends and companions to rid themselves of the like sore burden? Is there not some thoughtless acquaintance, younger or more ignorant than yourselves, that you may try to win into the right way; no little child whom you may tell of Jesus' love? Glencarran people," he continued, bending his eager gaze first on one and then another, "are the neighbours who walk beside you on this street, and sit with you in this church, to be your companions in the next life also? or is this poor life to be the end of your friendship, and must they sink into hell reproaching you, who knew the way of salvation, that you never spoke earnestly to them about the one thing needful? Alas! alas! the most earnest amongst us never properly realises these things. If we did, I think no day would pass without our warning some sinner to flee to Christ for refuge from the wrath to come. 'In the morning sow thy seed, and in the evening withhold not thine hand; for thou knowest not whether shall prosper, either this or that, or whether both shall be alike good.' And you know," he ob-

served, in conclusion, "you know to whom I give this advice. Only to those who hate sin, and are keeping strict watch over their own conduct. They *only* have a right to teach others."

Tears stood in the eyes of the girls, and some of the young men appeared impressed. They took their places in church without exchanging a word. But Mr Johnson's energy had quite exhausted him. He leaned back in his chair, wondering how he should get through the service. He was not even so strong as he had been when Clara died; and he was forcibly reminded, every Sabbath evening, that his time for sowing the good seed was nearly over. One of his pupils, who had observed him growing faint, appeared with a glass of wine, which she had run off to the village to seek.

It was a clear frosty night when the people came out of church—piercingly cold. As you looked down the village street, the red and yellow glow in the cottage windows contrasted strangely with the cold, pure light of the moon

and stars. Glencarran was a fishing village on the Donegal coast. It had originally been a very poor place, consisting only of fishermen's huts; but at the time I am telling you of, there were some good shops, besides a large constabulary barrack, and some respectable houses that had been built for the coast-guards and their families. The country for miles round was well cultivated. The farms were large—some of them rented by Scotchmen, who had introduced a very superior style of farming.

The village stood on a hill, and rich fields sloped down from it to the rocks that overhung the sea-shore. The road leading to the glebe ran along the top of these cliffs for nearly a mile. It was rather a long walk for so old a man as Mr Johnson, and he was glad to avail himself of the support which Joe's vigorous arm afforded. For a long time it had been looked upon as Joe's privilege to carry his books home for him on Sabbath evening.

Mr Johnson began the conversation by making kind inquiries after Mary and the little ones, and hoping that Joe found his place comfortable, and

was able to satisfy his master. They then walked for some way in silence, listening to the waves rolling in from the broad ocean and breaking on the shore, and watching the long silver line made by the moonlight upon the water. Joe was the first to speak.

"Sir, I thought it was only ministers that had to sow that seed you were telling us about to-night."

"So think a great many people, Joe; but I believe Scripture is very plain on the subject. Every true Christian should do something for Christ. Your lesson this evening says, "They that feared the Lord spake often one to another"—not merely ministers, you see."

"I'd like to try, sir, if I knew how."

"God will show you how, Joe. His Holy Spirit, who has put this wish into your heart, will surely show you how to work for Him. Opportunities for sowing the seed will offer themselves, if you are on the watch for them. Believe me, the will to be useful is far oftener wanting than the way; at least that is my own experience."

They parted at the avenue gate. "Good night, Joe," said Mr Johnson. "Here is a verse of a favourite hymn of mine to think of while you are walking home—

"Sow ye beside all waters,
Where the dew of heaven may fall;
Ye shall reap, if ye be not weary,
For the Spirit breathes o'er all."

Good night, my lad, and may God bless you."

The night had become so bitterly cold that Joe was very glad when he came in sight of his own door. A very pretty and pleasant picture presented itself as he entered. Mary, in her neatly fitting dress of brown merino, was sitting beside a blazing fire. A bow of blue ribbon fastening the clean collar was her only ornament. The blue ribbon was a favourite decoration of hers, for it had been Joe's present to her soon after they became acquainted, and although she had some gayer ribbons in her box, she liked best to wear this one in memory of their happy days. The firelight shone on her pretty fair hair so smoothly arranged, on her little tea-table with its snowy cover, and lighted up every corner of the small house, in which cleanliness

and order reigned supreme. The tea was wet, and the tea-pot stood drawing on the hearth ; and on the table was an abundant supply of certain much-admired currant cakes, which Mary was famous for making. Joe laid aside his hat and books, and sat down with great satisfaction. While they were at tea he told her as much as he remembered distinctly of what Mr Johnson had said at the class. Mary said she used often to hear him and Miss Clara talk like that ; she thought the master never rested from sowing that good seed, but she agreed with Joe that it would not be easy for them to do ; however, she was very glad he was going to try. He said he had begun to think of a plan, but it was still so unformed in his mind that he would sleep upon it, and tell Mary something about it next day. They went to bed early, as Joe would have to leave the house soon after five o'clock next morning.

He was Mr White's ploughman. Mr White had the largest farm near Glencarran, and required his men to work early and late. Joe had a responsible place, and was rather hard worked,

or, in his own phraseology, "very sore wrought;" but he was young and strong, and would not object to work so long as his health lasted.

Thus ended an important day in Joe Foster's history — a day he will remember with joy throughout eternity.





CHAPTER II.

JOE BEGINS HIS SOWING.



THE house next to the Fosters on the left hand was inhabited by a family of MacPhersons, consisting of an old fisherman, his wife, and one grown-up son. They were none of them much liked in Glencarran. Old Tom MacPherson was somewhat surly and ill-natured — “dour,” as the neighbours called him; he did not care much for company of any kind, but kept greatly to himself. He and his son had a boat and nets of their own, and during the fishing season they made a great deal of money, for which, however

(hardly earned though it was), they were but little the better, for they squandered the chief part of it on drink. The fisherman's life has its shady as well as its sunny side. It is very pleasant to be basking on the ocean during our few summer days; but there are rough days to be encountered, too. Tom and James MacPherson were pretty well inured to wet and cold. It was the most natural thing in the world that they should take a glass when they came off the water wet and chilled—no one would have dreamed of blaming them for it; but unhappily they never knew how to stop at the one glass, and at last they got into the habit of drinking as long as the money lasted.

James had a pleasant, open countenance. He used to be the brightest boy at school, and bade fair to be a credit to Glencarran. If anybody had told him then that he would have become a drunkard, before many more years had gone by, he would have declared that such a thing could never be. However, this very thing had come to pass. It was a good while since he got beyond the one glass when he came home from fishing,

and at the time of our story it was his custom to spend every evening at the public-house.

Since James became a slave to drink, his appearance was greatly changed for the worse ; his dress, which used to be neat and respectable, had become careless and ragged, and his very step, formerly firm and fearless, had lost its elasticity, for he had lost his self-respect. He had given up attending church ; and it was said that his Sabbaths were usually spent in cock-fighting, and other amusements as unsuited to the holy day. Indeed, the whole family lived like heathens. Mr Johnson, finding his efforts on their behalf totally unavailing, had given them up in despair.

Joe and Mary, you may suppose, did not find the MacPhersons very pleasant neighbours ; disgusted at the sounds of fighting and scolding they sometimes heard from next door, they kept as clear of them as they could. Yet Joe had a kind of liking for James. They used to do their sums and write their copies at the same desk at school, and had had many a game at marbles together after lesson hours.

While Joe was walking home from the glebe on Sabbath evening, thinking of all Mr Johnson had said, and wishing he could find some one to be useful to, those old days of his friendship with James MacPherson suddenly came into his mind, and he thought what a good thing it would be if he tried to counteract the bad example James was set at home. All Monday morning, while he was ploughing Mr White's field, he was turning his plan over and over in his mind, and wondering what would be the best way for him to set to work. The time between breakfast and dinner seemed shorter than usual.

"Mary," he began, while they were at dinner, "what would you say if Jamie MacPherson could be got to give up drinking?"

Mary stared. "I'd say it was a fine thing indeed, dear; but Jamie 'll never give up the drink now."

"Well, Mary, maybe no, but queerer things than that have happened. I'll try to wile him away frae Ned Lapsley's in the evenings. Ned thinks he has a tight hold on him; but with the

help of God, you and I will see what we can do for him."

"I am quite agreeable, Joe; but I don't yet understand what you mean to do. Don't you mind how Mr Johnson worked at him till he was tired?"

"That's true enough, Mary," said Joe meditatively; "but," he continued, brightening up, "you say yourself that nothing worth is ever done without taking trouble. Jamie hasna a comfortable spot at his ain fireside when he comes in tired and cold, and maybe finds the fire out, and no supper ready. It's not so very strange that he goes to the public-house for some cheeriness and comfort that he cannot get at home. I'll bring him in with me to-night, and we'll have a good supper for him, and you'll read some of that library book while Jamie and I take our smoke: see if we don't keep him out of Ned's for once in a way."

Mary laughed at the satisfaction with which Joe unfolded his plan; but she confessed that it seemed a very promising one, and she said she

would do what she could to make the evening pleasant to James.

During the day Mary had occasion to go into Sally MacPherson's for something she had borrowed from her, and she mentally agreed with Joe that there was not much inducement for Jamie to spend his evenings there. The house was untidy, dirty, and cold; the money that should have gone for firing being generally spent on drink. Sally had a sorrowful, careless air. She looked as if she did not think it worth her while to take trouble about anything. She got but few pleasant words from Tom. Her life had been one of hardship, and she had never begun to prepare for that country where there is no hardship. Had she been asked if she believed in another life, she would have replied that she did; but she made no preparation for it. She felt no sorrow for sin; made no effort to follow Jesus Christ and keep His commandments. She acted as if this poor life (so disappointing and unsatisfying at the best) were to be the end of all. Mary and Joe may have want and trouble to contend with in their future

years, but then their case will be very different. They are heirs to a kingdom, the possession of which will more than make amends for the worst they can suffer here.

Mary, true to her promise, had taken extra pains with her arrangements that evening, and by the time Joe came in she was quite ready for her company. Joe was thinking of going to see if Jamie had come from his work, when he looked in, asking a light for his pipe.

"Jamie," said Joe, "will you stop and take a cup of tea with us?"

"Ay, and thank you, Joe. The old man's fairly wild to-night, and you look very comfortable here."

"What's gone wrong wi' him?" inquired Joe.

"I don't know! He went down to see to the boat at four o'clock, and he and the Parkers had some words about our landing; leastways that's what he says. He's just come in, and he's not the very best of company."

Jenny soon made friends with the visitor; and at length became so intimate with him that she climbed on his knee, while he showed her the

contents of his pockets. Mary began to read as soon as she had cleared away the tea things. She read with ease and spirit, having been trained to it in Miss Johnson's sick-room. The book she produced was an amusing history of adventure among the red Indians of North America. It was plentifully illustrated; and James was so well pleased with looking and listening, that although he said two or three times that he must soon be going, he sat on and on till some time after Lapsley's had been shut up for the night, and Joe had the satisfaction of seeing him go home well pleased with his entertainment.

"Will you come in to-morrow night and hear the rest of the story?" asked Joe.

"Surely! I've no objections," replied his guest. "I never spent a nicer piece of an evening in my life."

Joe's thoughts were pleasant ones as he laid his head down that night. Mr Johnson had said, that a sower of the good seed needed both faith and patience, and must be contented with very small beginnings. "This is a small be-



"MARY READ WITH EASE AND SPIRIT."

ginning," thought Joe, "but, with God's blessing, my little seed may yet grow into a fine healthy plant." For upwards of three weeks James came regularly to spend his evenings with Joe and Mary. In all that time he was only once at Lapsley's.

The neighbours began to remark his changed habits, but Joe carefully avoided saying anything on the subject. James considered Joe's cheerful fireside a pleasant place for a smoke or a chat, and he liked the books Mary read for him. Many of the most amusing stories and travels in the school library were borrowed for these occasions. At first Jamie went away as soon as the story was ended, but one night he stayed while Joe brought out the Bible and read the chapter; and always after that, without a word having been said on the subject by Joe or Mary, he remained for their evening prayers.

This was delightful encouragement, and so elated Joe that he resolved on asking Jamie to go to church with him at once; but Mary, who possessed both more prudence and greater ex-

perience, advised him to wait for a week or two before he did so, lest he should frighten his scholar away. Joe had so great respect for Mary's superior book-learning, that in most things he was satisfied to be guided by her judgment.





CHAPTER III.

“IN DUE TIME YE SHALL REAP IF YE
FAINT NOT.”



EANWHILE the spring advanced. The woodbine in the hedges about Glencarran was getting green ; the thrushes and blackbirds sang loudly ; and the rooks and herons began to build in the old trees behind the glebe. Joe went whistling at his work, he felt so light-hearted.

The steep hill above the shore was the hardest to plough in Mr White's farm, and was generally left to the last. It was a tedious piece of work, and Joe was obliged to stop and rest his horses

each time he came down the hill. He had a good view of the long line of sand stretching away towards the glebe, and Mr Johnson was often to be seen walking up and down the shore. He sometimes stopped to talk to the boatmen, and then Joe looked after him with interest, for he knew he was sowing the good seed.

To the right Joe could see the backs of the village houses, and the little gardens that the people took such pride in. His own garden was quite a show, for Mary had some taste for flowers, and had laid out one bed, which was always gay in summer with roses, stocks, sweetwilliams, and nasturtiums. It was very pretty even then, with a golden and white border of crocuses and snowdrops. Joe let Mary amuse herself as she liked with her flowers; but his own delight was in his potato and cabbage plot, and he used to hurry over his dinner in order to have a little time for digging in the garden.

He was employed in this way one day towards the end of February, and Mary was standing near him with Jenny in her arms, when James

MacPherson came into the garden. He began to play with the child, whom an occasional present of lozenges had made a firm friend of his. There was a wonderful change for the better in his looks; he was recovering his self-respect, and could now look brightly in the face of any one who spoke to him.

"Jamie," began Joe abruptly, "there's something I want you to do for me."

"Well, Joe, I will, if I can; but tell me what it is you want."

"Come wi' me to the church to-morrow."

James laughed in his careless way: "I canna promise you that, Joe."

"Why canna ye, Jamie? Sure there is no good reason that I know of."

Jamie laughed again: "I've no clothes that would fit the church, Joe, for one thing."

Joe looked at James's dress, and was obliged to confess that it would hardly do. His clothes were one mass of patches, and smelled strongly of stale fish. "They'd do well enough for the evening church," he said. "I wish you'd come, Jamie."

"If you went once you'd like to go again," observed Mary.

"I'll meet you at the church gate, Jamie," continued Joe, "an' we'll go in thegither; and you can sit in our seat. I'll be at the gate after the class to-morrow night."

"I canna go to-morrow," replied Jamie. Joe persevered; he had no idea of being discouraged.

"You'll come wi' me some night, Jamie?"

"Well, there's no saying, Joe; maybe I will;" and that was all he could be got to say.

On Sunday week Joe set out for the class in great spirits, for James had at last promised to go to church, and said he would be waiting for him at the gate before service began. But poor Joe's hopes were doomed to disappointment; for although he lingered about the churchyard until the prayers were nearly over, no James appeared. He took the matter greatly to heart, he had built so much on Jamie's promise; and it was all Mary could do to cheer him up that evening.

Joe did not remonstrate much with Jamie for his breach of faith; and he was rewarded for his

forbearance, for Jamie showed signs of yielding towards the end of the following week. He paid the Fosters an early visit on Sunday morning; and Joe and he were a long time shut up together in the little room. Mary's feelings were not entirely pleasurable when she saw them issue forth at length ready for church—Joe in his old working clothes, and Jamie in Joe's Sunday dress, his new cap and crimson handkerchief. She took a wifely pride in Joe's respectable appearance. His best clothes were always carefully brushed and mended by her own hands; and to tell the truth, she did not like to see Jamie wear them. Joe looked so fully pleased and satisfied that she felt still more provoked. She could not help reproaching him a little when he came home to dinner.

“Why, you might have lent Jamie your working clothes,” she began; “they'd a' done him right well, and the congregation would not have had to look at you when you went into the church.”

“Indeed, Mary, I never gave a thought to my clothes, or the people either; I was that content to have Jamie in the seat wi' me, I'd ha' done

more than that to get him out. And he liked what he heard ; he says he'll go again to-night. You shouldna grudge him my clothes, woman, dear, if they entice him out to hear the word of God."

"You're in the right, Joe," replied Mary ; "I know I shouldna ha' been vexed."

James not only went back that evening, but he went next Sunday too, and signified his intention of being a constant attendant for the future ; moreover, he began at once to lay by part of his wages for the purchase of a Sunday suit.

The steep hill was ploughed, and Joe was busily engaged in sowing it with oats one bright morning, when, as he got near the bottom of the field, he heard voices, and looking over the hedge saw Mr Johnson standing in the midst of a group of fishermen, who were at work caulking their boat. They had drawn her a little way up the beach to a sheltered nook among the rocks, where they had made a large fire under the pot containing their pitch. As Joe was working near the hedge, he could overhear a good part of what Mr Johnson was saying to them. He was telling

them in very simple language how Jesus found the fishermen mending their nets by the lake of Galilee, and called them to follow Him; and how they left all they had, their boats and nets and cottages, as soon as they heard His blessed voice. Then he explained to them why those fishermen had to forsake all they had when they would follow Jesus. He told them that Jesus was calling them at that time, though they did not see Him; and all He required them to leave was their sins. Fighting, swearing, and Sabbath-breaking must be given up if they would be His disciples. Seeing that he had gained their attention, he went on to tell them how pleasant Christ's service was, and how safe He kept His people. If they had Him for their keeper, they would fear neither storms on sea nor troubles on shore.

When Joe returned to the neighbourhood of the hedge, Mr Johnson was bidding his little audience good morning. He soon perceived Joe, and came to join him.

"Both of us sowing to-day, Joe," was the first thing he said.

"Yes, sir," replied Joe.

"It will be some time before your crop comes up, Joe, but most probably it will be longer still before there are any signs of mine ; yet I am as sure that one will spring up as the other. Do you know why I am so sure ?"

Joe had a good idea of the answer, but he was not quite prepared with it.

"Because I asked the great Husbandman to bless it, and water it with the dew of His grace. You have been sowing the good seed, too, Joe. How does it prosper ?"

Joe coloured, and looked a little awkward. "How do you know that I have been sowing, sir ?"

"Because," replied Mr Johnson, smiling, "very little happens in Glencarran that I do not either see or hear of. I have made my own observations the last few Sundays. I have seen poor Jamie a worshipper in God's house, and I have heard who brought him there. Go on, my young friend ; it is good work, it will last. When all this world's learning is looked upon as a little thing—when the greatest generals and their vic-

tories no longer excite admiration—the work you have engaged in will meet you again. It may be going on years after you are dead, and you will find fruits of it in heaven. But do not be discouraged,” concluded Mr Johnson, “if you meet with disappointments. I have met with a great many, and you are likely to do the same ; so I warn you not to let yourself be cast down by them.”

Joe had soon cause to remember Mr Johnson’s warning. He had occasion to go into the garden the next evening immediately on returning from his work ; and his indignation was very great when he saw a man forcing his way through a gap in the hedge, which he fancied he had securely blocked up. The man had a sack across his arm. Joe stood still and watched him. He saw him go to the turf-stack and begin to fill his bag from it. Mary had told him some days before that somebody was carrying away their turf, for she had remarked a hole in the stack which was daily becoming larger. Joe suspected a certain Andrew Reid, who lived at the opposite side of the street, and bore any-

thing but a good character among the neighbours ; and when he saw a man with the sack, he felt sure he could be no other than Reid. He crept a little nearer in order to make sure of him ; but the rustling he made startled the depredator, and he looked round.

It would be hard to say whether Joe was most angry or surprised when he recognised Jamie MacPherson. He was passionate by nature ; and it was nearly impossible that he should remember his position as Jamie's teacher just then. He burst out into a torrent of fierce and angry reproaches, as most of us might have done under the circumstances. Jamie started on seeing Joe, but he did not speak till Joe paused from want of breath ; then he flung the turf down at the foot of the stack, and said sullenly—

“There they're for you. You needna ha' made such an outcry for the like of that. I'm sure I'd have made it up in a day or two.”

So saying, he turned and went out of the garden, and the Fosters saw nothing more of him for almost a week. Mary was quite as angry as Joe ; and their joint resolution that

night was to have nothing more to say to Jamie, who had proved so unworthy, and made so base a return for their kindness. But after a few days their just indignation softened a little, and Joe began to make excuses for his pupil. "You see, Mary," he said, "Jamie has been doing evil all his life, and it was a folly to expect him to forget his bad ways at once. He doesn't know what it means to be honest, I think; but he did look ashamed of himself when I found him out; and I'm certain sure he'd have felt no shame a short time ago."

"Joe," replied Mary, "I shouldn't have tried to set you against him as I've been doing these days past." Regretful tears rose to her eyes as she spoke; and she continued in a low tone, "We are often ungrateful to God, and He has been far kinder to us than we have been to Jamie."

The result of the conference was, that little Jenny was sent next door to bid Jamie come in. The child returned, saying, "He says he'll not come."

"Be off again, Jenny, and tell him that

mammy has got a nice book. She's waiting to read till he comes."

This last embassy was successful ; and James appeared, looking rather grave and awkward. He barely returned Joe's and Mary's pleasant "good evening," and settled himself in his accustomed corner in silence. The next day he called Joe into the garden, and showed him that he had put back all the turf he had taken.

"I'd rather nor ten pound I hadna touched one o' them," he said.

"Say no more about it, Jamie, man," replied Joe, "but let by-gones be by-gones."

From that day their intercourse continued on the same footing as before, and not long afterwards James began to accompany Joe to Mr Johnson's Sunday evening class. Joe was extremely glad of this. He knew Jamie would learn the meaning of truth and honesty and gratitude better than he could teach him.

Mary was very happy and prosperous at this period of her history. She often gave God thanks for Joe and the little ones, and thought that the sun shone upon few happier homes than

hers. But one morning she got a sad fright about the baby. He had not seemed well for some days, but she had not fancied he was going to be very ill. However, after Joe went out at breakfast-time that morning, the child's symptoms alarmed her so much that she sent for the doctor. It was an anxious time to poor Mary till he arrived, for her affection magnified baby's danger. The neighbour women came to see how he was, and condole with her. There was a good deal of kindness among them, poor things!

The doctor assured her that there was not so much the matter as she had feared ; and little Andy grew very much better after his visit. He was lying asleep on his mother's knee when good old Thomas Irvine, a particular friend of Mary's, came to inquire for him. Thomas was the oldest inhabitant in Glencarran, where most people reached a good old age. He was ninety years of age, and wonderfully active in mind and body still. The slated cottage near the church gate had been his dwelling all those years. He had a good word from every one, and was never missed from his place in church.

"Well, dear," he began, "wee Andy's in the way of mending now, I hope?"

"O, yes, Thomas, I would fain hope so; but he frightened me dreadfully. Oh! what would I do if I lost my dear wee son!"

"He is in good hands, dear; I needna mind you of that."

"I knew that all the while, Thomas; but I couldna keep from fretting."

"You take trouble far too much, Mary," said the old man, gravely shaking his head; "and it's a bad thing to do."

"Who can help taking trouble?" asked Mary.

"I've done a great deal in my time, dear. I've seen mysel' mourning after them that died and went away till I made mysel' ill. That was when I was young, Mary; but I saw the folly of it, and I gave it up."

"How did you give it up, Thomas? Did you forget them you'd been mourning for?"

"No, Mary, I never forgot one of them; but I saw that the time was wearing on when I'd be following them, and I set mysel' to make ready for my journey. I know it canna be long till I



"WEE ANDY'S MENDING NOW, I HOPE."



see all my dear friends again. Christ's watching over them, Mary : He's been watching over me all my pilgrimage, and it will soon be ended now."

"You've had a long life, Thomas."

"Ay, dear ; but if I was assured of one year to come, it would seem longer to me than all the time that's past."

"Has it been happy as well as long?"

"It has been full of mercies," replied the old man earnestly ; "mercies and loving-kindnesses : 'mercy has followed me all the days of my life, and I shall dwell in the house of the Lord for ever.' But I've had my troubles, Mary. I lost my father, mother, brothers, and sisters, and many an old friend and neighbour too ; and I nearly broke my heart after them that went to America. Almost all my comrades and acquaintances went. It was a sin and a folly to take trouble in the way I did. I would not do it now."

"I shall have to wait a long while, Thomas, before I can take things as easy as you do. I think God never expects us not to grieve after

friends ; but at length He teaches us submission to His holy will."

"God is good to you, dear ; He is not going to try you this time. Baby is wakening, and he looks finely."

"Will you stay with us to-night, Thomas ? And when Joe comes in you must return thanks to God for us ; He has been so gracious to us—so much better nor my fears. Joe will take you home again any time you like."





CHAPTER IV.

THE ORANGE BALL.



HERE was unusual excitement in Glencarran and the neighbourhood, for the Orangemen were about to give a ball. This ball was given once a year, and was quite a gay affair; it occupied the thoughts of the young people a good deal; indeed, there was nothing else talked of among them for at least a month before it took place.

One of those who took the greatest interest in it was Jamie. The day before the ball he spent a long time in decorating the room where they were to dance, and was backwards and forwards

between it and his own house many times before he had finished his task. He found time to look in upon Joe and Mary for a little in the evening.

"Joe," said he, when he had given them an account of what he had been doing, "I hope you will be wi' us to-morrow night?"

"No, Jamie, I don't think I will."

"Not coming, Joe! Why, you never missed before."

"True enough, Jamie, I never did."

"You were always the life of the whole of us, Joe; there'll be very little fun going if you're not there. Speak to him, Mary; bid him go."

"No, Jamie, I canna bid him go, for I know his reasons are good."

Jamie looked annoyed and perplexed: "Are you tired with it?" he asked.

"It's not that either, Jamie; for I was in as much conceit with it as ever last year."

"Well, then," said Jamie impatiently, "why won't you go this time? What's your reasons?"

"Ay, that's what they're all asking. I've had twenty o' them in here the day begging of me to

go to the ball. I'm not bidding you stay away, mind ; but I canna go mysel'. Now, Mary, you'll have to help me to explain to him what I mean. To begin, Jamie, you know I'm not just the same man as I was some years ago."

"No ; they're all saying you're grown more serious and Christian like than you were."

"I am thinking more seriously than I did this time last year, Jamie. I'm far, far frae what I ought to be, I know ; but I do find a change in mysel'. I am trying to follow Christ ; and it takes me to be very careful what I do."

"You know yourself, Jamie," put in Mary, "that it wouldna be consistent of him to go to this ball ; it wasna any harm a year ago, before he made a profession of religion, but it would not do now. You know when people become earnest about religion, they generally give up the like of these amusements ; and if Joe was to go on wi' them, he'd be bringing discredit on the cause of Christ. There's plenty would say he wasna in earnest. Don't you understand all that, Jamie?"

"No, Mary, not a word of it," replied he, rather angrily. "I'm sure there's no harm in the ball,

and Joe's not so much better than other people; he needna think that everybody will be remarking what he is doing. I've no time to stand listening to such folly," and off he went.

"Mary, dear," said Joe, "I'm sorry he's vexed; but I canna content him in the way he wants me. I must be consistent, now that I am trying to teach others; that was the word Mr Johnson said. It's no matter how innocent the ball may be, I know I'll be better by my ain fireside."

"Ay, Joe! How often I've heard dear Miss Clara say, that it would be better to deny one's self a thousand harmless pleasures than run the risk of casting a stumbling-block in the way of one soul. 'Mary,' she'd say, 'no one will ever regret having made a sacrifice for Christ's sake.'"

Jamie's indignation with Joe and Mary did not last very long, for the next evening, when he was dressed, he looked in to make one more attack upon Joe.

"Well, Joe, will I have to go by myself?"

"I am afraid you will, Jamie."

"That's too bad. Mary, will you give me some o' your flowers for the room?"

"Surely, and welcome, Jamie ; just come out wi' me to the garden and choose what you like. There's roses, fuchsias, sweetpeas, and mignonne. You may have every flower in the garden if you like."

"Now, Jamie, is there anything you'd like frae me?" asked Joe, laughing.

"Well, perhaps you'd lend me your blue silk tie?"

Joe goodnaturedly went to fetch the tie, and Jamie set off with it in great spirits.

He came in the next evening to give a history of his proceedings, "Now," said he, when he had told of his amusements, "aren't you sorry you didna go too, Joe?"

"No, Jamie, I'm o' the same mind as I was yesterday."

It was a very stormy day—a complete contrast to the days that had gone before. When Joe was down on the shore in the afternoon, he knew from the grey sky and fast driving clouds, as well as from the look of the sea, that there was going to be a storm. He then cast anxious glances far away to where some of the Glencar-

ran fishing-boats were but just to be seen, and would have given a great deal to see them safely drawn up on the beach again.

Mr Johnson, at his study window, was looking out in the same direction. The three boats, which appeared like little dots to Joe, were seen distinctly by aid of his glass ; and when the daylight began to fail, he was glad to see that the men in them were making what haste they could towards the shore. Showers of spray were falling on the rocks as the great waves dashed in and broke upon them. The sight, though very grand, was not a pleasant one to Mr Johnson ; it reminded him too forcibly of disasters in the past. He sat in his lonely room trying to read, but listening to the voice of the waves, and to the wind moaning and whistling in the old trees of the rookery.

As the night advanced, the wind got up ; and then the fishermen's wives grew seriously uneasy, for the boats had not returned. It was comparatively calm at seven o'clock, when James MacPherson went in to the Fosters', and for some time our little party sat talking merrily round the fire.

Jamie was making a boat for Jenny, and she was watching his operations with intense interest, and telling him that her boat must have a mast and a real sail, when the door was burst open, and Brian Diver's wife came in with her apron at her face, crying as if her heart would break.

"The wind's tearing and raging," she said, "and Brian's not home yet. I've been down on the shore this hour, and not a sign of the boats; though, indeed, it's that dark you couldna see them if they were three yards off. Weans, dears! what'll I do! what'll I do!"

"It surely is rising a great storm," said Joe, gravely, as a strong blast at that moment rushed round the house, and, sweeping under the door, made the candle on the table flare and gutter.

"Who's out with Brian, Nelly dear?"

"Willy Flemming's in the boat wi' him; but Alick Hart and his two boys were in company with their boat. Jamie, is your father in yet?"

"O, surely!" cried Jamie, starting to his feet; "I wasna in the house since dinner-time, but he said this morning he wouldna be long out;" and

he hurried next door to see. He returned immediately, looking startled and uneasy. "No, then, Nelly, he's never come yet. Come down to the shore, Joe, and let us look out for them."

"Yes, Joe," said Mary, "and God go wi' you."

"Don't take on that way, Nelly dear," said Joe, as he was going out, "Jamie and I will look for Brian, and you stay here with Mary till we come back."

The worth of Mary's character was acknowledged in such an hour as this. She soon had a large party round her fire, for it was to her the poor wives and mothers went for comfort. Mrs Flemming, Mrs Hart, and Sally MacPherson joined poor Nelly Diver. Mary assured them that Joe and the other men would do all they could to help; and she asked them to pray to Him who alone could still the tempest. Then she took her Bible and read them a psalm; and Nelly, who at any other time would have run away at sight of the Bible, was very glad to listen.

There was a crowd collected on the shore, consisting of all the men and boys of Glencarran.

Mr Johnson was among them ; he had not thought of going to bed. When Joe and Jamie went down, it was too dark to do anything ; but in about an hour the clouds broke, and the moon appeared for a minute or two, but long enough to show them two of the boats in the swell not very far from shore. The men were calling to them, but though they could hear the sound of their voices, the roaring waves prevented their distinguishing a word. They saw the boats were making no progress ; but that was all they could see. Mr Johnson advised them to drag his little boat down to the edge of the water, and to fetch a coil of rope from the glebe. By the time they had done so, the moon appeared again. Then there was a cry that rose above the roar of the elements, and the anxious watchers saw the boats no longer, but thought they could perceive the men struggling in the water. Joe, Francie Flemming, and two brothers named Harkin, pushed the boat into the sea, and tried to row out towards where the fishing-boats had last been seen.

It was a time of terrible suspense to those

on shore. For some minutes the rowers could make no progress whatever, though they exerted themselves as for life ; but once past the surf they got on better. Three of the men were brought to land in the boat—Brian Diver, and Alick Hart and his son Jack ; it was young Joe Hart who was missing. But he was known to be a good swimmer, and the people did not lose heart about him yet. Joe was preparing to row out again to look for him, when he was seen struggling in the surf a short distance from shore ; but his efforts were growing fainter and fainter. One of the men dashed in and pulled him out of reach of the waves. He was then carried to the village, where the other men had already been taken, and put to bed, and hot spirits and every other restorative that could be thought of put in requisition.

You will readily believe that none but the little children slept in Glencarran that night. The houses where the poor fishermen were carried were soon full of the neighbours. In a short time Hart and the boys came to themselves, and seemed likely to do well ; but poor

old Diver had sustained a sad shock ; and when he did speak at last, Nelly could not make out a word he said. It was piteous to hear Mrs Flemming asking for her boy, and Sally MacPherson calling for Tom. Alas ! there was no comfort to be given them. Alick Hart said, the last time he saw Tom's boat was just before dark, and it was then a good piece away from theirs. Old Flemming and his son Sandy had never left the shore at all ; and after seeing the rescued ones likely to do well, Joe and some of the other men went back to join them.

Coldly and sadly dawned the day on Glencarran, where there were some thankful and some despairing hearts. The storm was greatly lulled ; but it had left its traces, the fishermen saw, in tangled masses of sea-weed and shells which were tossed about the shore. They walked backwards and forwards in the gray dawn, looking for that they feared to find. In a few hours they discovered both the missing ones. Tom MacPherson presented a dreadful sight ; his face was a good deal cut and bruised, as if he had been flung repeatedly against the rocks. Poor

Jamie, in an agony, laid a cloth over his face, as they raised him to carry him home. The anguish in the two houses, when those who had so lately quitted them in life and health were brought in stiff and cold and laid upon the bed, was very, very bitter. Need I describe it to my readers? Ah! there is little need. Most of us have wept for the dead, and those who have not yet done so, cannot be long exempt from this, sharpest of earthly pains.

Brian Diver was so weak and low all that day, that they feared he would hardly recover. His mind seemed to wander sometimes; he was not conscious of his wife's presence, but called out as if he thought he were still in the boat, and giving directions to his companions. As he was still weaker in the evening, Nelly asked him if she would send for the priest.

"No, dear," was his answer, "get Mr Johnson."

"Mr Johnson, Brian! you're out o' your right mind!"

"Ay, Nelly, Mr Johnson; he'll speak about Him that said, 'Follow me.'"

Nelly could not believe her ears, and tried

hard to divert his thoughts ; but a woman in the house had heard what he said, and came over to him, asking,

“Will I bring in Mr Johnson, Brian? He’s in Tom MacPherson’s now, or was, a wee minute ago.”

The sick man nodded ; and his messenger was gone before Nelly could prevent her. Mr Johnson soon stood beside the bed. Then Brian appeared to revive. “Tell me more about the blessed Saviour, sir, that came when they were mending the nets, and persuaded them to follow Him.”

“That I will, my friend. I am right glad that you are thinking of Him.”

“Ay, sir, I have never left off thinking about Him since yon day on the shore. You mind you said He was calling us to follow Him, too.”

“He died for us poor sinners, Brian, to save us from the pains of hell. Believe that He is your Saviour—that He suffered that bitter death for you ; and that belief will make you feel sorrow for your sins, and you will try to

obey His commandments—you will wish much to please Him.” Mr Johnson then gave him a short account of Adam’s disobedience, and of the way God provided for his escape from ruin ; and Brian listened as if the story was new to him. He could not read, and had never been in the way of hearing what was good ; so the Bible stories which Mr Johnson had told him on the shore had taken the greater hold of his imagination.

“You have been mercifully delivered from a great danger, Brian. Jesus is calling you more than ever to follow Him : you must give Him the life He has spared.”

‘I hope I will, sir ; I hope I’ll live a very different life for the time to come. I’d no notion I’d ever see the light of day again. Joseph Hart was praying off and on the whole night, and he bade me pray too. I cried to Him to save me the way Peter did, when the blessed Saviour was walking on the water, and He stretched out His hand and caught him when he was going to sink.”

From that day a vast change was to be seen

in Brian. He used to go to the parsonage in the long summer evenings, and no one was told what he did there; and he was wont to return, looking very thoughtful. He was often seen in church; and when Nelly ventured to remonstrate with him for going there, he told her that Mr Johnson's religion was simple and easy, and it suited him.

We must visit Joe and Mary for a few minutes. The excitement, fatigue, and sorrow which they had undergone within the last four-and-twenty hours had told upon them. They were expected next door, and at the Flemmings' later in the night; but Joe felt so weary, that he said he would try to get a little sleep first. He stretched himself on the bed, while Mary got some tea ready for him, and began to give her a history of the sad scenes he had just witnessed. He told her that Jamie was nearly out of his mind because he and his father had parted in anger. They had a dispute the morning after the ball, before Tom went out fishing; and Jamie had said bitter things, which he would now gladly give his life to recall. Tom found out

that Jamie had expended more money than he thought right in his preparations for the ball, and had reproached him in no gentle terms.

“I wasna able to give him any comfort, Mary. Oh! it's so different with Alick and Sarah Fleming. I can tell them that Willy's safe in Christ's kingdom, and if they turn to the Lord they'll be sure to find him again; but I canna tell Lilly and Jamie that Tom's in heaven. It's not for the like of us poor sinners to judge others, and God's mercies are great; but the very last words I ever heard Tom speak were curses. On Sunday morning when I called in for Jamie, I invited Tom to go with us to the church, and I told him it was an awful thing for an old man like him to be living the way he did, profaning the Sabbath-day, and taking God's name in vain. Well, Mary, he let an awful curse out of his mouth, and said, no one should ever see him darken the church door. He said I had made a fool of Jamie; and he called the Almighty to witness that I should never make one of him! I shuddered to hear him. Mary, dear, it's fearful to think of a fellow-creature setting out on the

journey Tom has taken, without the right belief and trust in his Saviour. Any way, Jamie's in sore trouble," said Joe, with a sigh. "I'm afeared he'll not get over it."

But Jamie's nature was light and careless. He was not one to grieve long for anything. That which would have been a life-long regret to Joe or Mary, merely clouded his laughing brow for a week or two; and, long before the summer was over, he was as happy and merry as ever. God has given His creatures widely different natures. There is great variety in their capacities for enjoying and suffering. Jamie's grief for his father was violent, but did not last long. Old Thomas Irvine would never have to reprove *him* for "taking trouble!"

Nothing very remarkable happened in Glencarran during the remainder of the summer and autumn, except a happy change which took place in Jamie's circumstances—I mean his marriage. Elizabeth Irvine, Tom's granddaughter, was respected by every one in the place. She was pious and industrious, as well as neat in her appearance, and pleasant in her manners. She

was dressmaker and milliner to the village and neighbourhood for miles round ; and was always to be seen at her work in the window of Tom's cottage. She was quiet and reserved, so that no one would have dreamed of Jamie's suiting her, or of her attracting him. But so it was. She had attended Mr Johnson's class ever since she could read, and was still constant in her attendance when Joe brought Jamie there. The other young people soon began to observe that Elizabeth's grave eyes lit up when Jamie appeared ; and to the general surprise of Glencarran, she was sometimes to be met walking on the shore with him in the evening as the summer wore on.

The end of it was, that they were married in November, and many shots were fired and many parties given in honour of the happy event. Joe and Mary Foster were, of course, among the wedding guests ; for none rejoiced at Jamie's good fortune more cordially than they. Elizabeth made a surprising transformation next door ; and Jamie's home soon rivalled Joe's in tidiness and comfort. Sally MacPherson was

very fond of her daughter-in-law. They lived most happily together, and there was no quarrelling now to disturb their peace-loving neighbours.

The only other change in Glencarran affairs was, that Mr Johnson, no longer able to do the whole duty of the parish, had to keep a curate.





CHAPTER V.

JOE'S FAITH IS TRIED.



HE winter set in cold and severe.

It happened that Joe, and a man named Philip Black, had the charge of Mr White's horses, and were consequently thrown a great deal into one another's society. They were always sent together to the nearest town for coal and other things wanted by their master.

Joe had not given up trying to sow the good seed, but rather (encouraged by his success in Jamie's case) was more earnest in it than ever. It was natural that he should be anxious about

Philip, who worked beside him every day ; and he had often made an attempt to introduce the subject of religion—the subject which had become, of all others, the most interesting to him.

But Philip did not enter into it readily, and usually tried to turn the conversation. Joe had two or three times lately begged him not to swear as he was in the habit of doing ; and though he had not said much in reply, he had never been quite friendly with Joe since.

One day Mr White sent them both to Loughban with the carts for coal, charging them to return home as quickly as possible.

They had transacted their business, and were almost ready to set out on their way home, when Philip met with some friends of his who offered to treat him, and he asked Joe to look after his horse for a moment while he went with them. Joe did so without fear, for Philip was considered a sober man ; but many minutes passed, and still he did not appear. It was rapidly growing dark, and poor Joe began to get impatient and uneasy. He could not leave his horse to go

and look for his companion ; and it was time they were going home.

He had nearly fretted himself into a fever when Philip came up, but unfortunately in no state for the road ; for he had been drinking deeply, and was quite unable to lead his horse. What was to be done ? Joe was much vexed. Philip's friends said they would keep him for the night, if there was any way of getting the horse and cart home, and he could make his way to Glencarran early next morning.

Joe thought there would be no use in reproaching his comrade's false friends for the mischief they had done ; and as he could think of no better plan than that which they proposed, it was finally arranged that one of them should go home with Philip's cart, and that he should remain the night in town.

Mr White was not in the yard when Joe arrived ; and as he was anxious to screen Philip from blame, he put the coal in safety, and fed and cleaned both horses before going home. He was weary and out of spirits—glad to go to bed at once.

Next morning Philip came to him, and entreated him not to say anything about his having been left behind the night before. Joe replied, that he certainly would not mention the matter to anybody; but if Mr White were to ask him directly whether Philip came home with him or not, he would have to tell the truth.

"That won't do, Joe; if the master asks you you must say I came home wi' you."

"No, Phil, I canna tell a lie. It would be wrong to deceive Mr White; and I am accountable to a far greater Master than him."

Philip was exceedingly indignant, and called Joe all manner of hard names. Joe was not aware of his chief cause for anxiety, however. His master had commissioned him to bring a large parcel of groceries from town. He had stowed it carefully in the cart before he fell in with his friends; but it had either fallen out, or had been taken by the man who brought the cart home.

This last was Philip's only hope. He intended to try and recover the parcel that evening; but Mr White had already asked for it,

and in order to gain time, he had assured him that it was not ready when he and Joe left Loughban with the coal. But Mr White had occasion to ride to Loughban that afternoon, and on making inquiry at the grocer's, learned that the parcel had been duly delivered to his messenger. He called Joe, and asked him if Philip was sober the night before.

"I wish you would not ask me, sir," was Joe's reply.

"Ay, but I will ask you, and I'll thank you to tell me the truth. Was he sober or not?"

"No, then, sir, he was not."

"Did you see him put that parcel in the cart?"

Joe said he did not see it put in.

"Did he come home with you last night?"

Joe hesitated, but Mr White repeated his question in an angry tone, and he had to answer, though very reluctantly, that Philip had not returned with him.

Mr White was very angry with Philip, and told him he would turn him off the next time he behaved in such a manner; he also stopped the

price of the lost parcel out of his wages. Philip was furious with Joe, and swore he should have his revenge before long.

Joe had soon cause to remember his threats of vengeance. Mr White had a valuable horse, for which he had given a large sum at the last June fair; and about a fortnight after the unlucky journey to Loughban he fell lame. He was well taken care of, for Joe always worked with him; and he served his earthly master well, remembering that he worked under the eye of a Master in heaven; so all entrusted to his charge was anxiously cared for. He was much vexed about the chestnut's lameness, and assured Mr White that he could in no way account for it. But he could not help seeing that Mr White did not believe him, and that his confidence in him seemed to be shaken. His manner was quite changed of late; but poor Joe never suspected that Philip could be so false as to say that the chestnut's swollen leg was caused by his rough usage, though he knew he was his enemy, and quite capable of poisoning his master's mind against him.

The change in his master's manner was so marked, that he was not surprised when he gave him warning, and required him to give up the house which he held only so long as he was in Mr White's service. He was really afraid to tell Mary what had happened, knowing how bitterly she would feel leaving the home where they had been so happy together.

Joe and Mary rose from their evening prayer still sorrowful, but by no means so hopeless as they had been. Joe sat before the fire thinking for a long time, with his head bent down.

"What's vexing you, dear?" asked his wife, after watching him in silence for nearly half an hour.

"I have been asking the Lord to forgive me my trespasses as I forgive them that trespass against me, Mary ; but I'm afeared my heart wasna in the words ; and you know He doesna hear the prayers we offer up, if our hearts are not in the words we speak. Philip set the master against me, and, God forgive me ! I've been hating him all day ; there's no evil or misfortune I'd have thought too bad for him. I need to be forgiven. And He will not forgive me unless I

forgive Philip his trespasses against me ; so I'm trying to bring my mind to it ; but it's hard—O, woman dear, but it's hard !”

Mary was perplexed and troubled. She had been a follower of Christ longer than her husband ; but she was too sincere to hide from herself that she was little, if any, nearer the spirit he was striving after.

They had to leave their neat rooms and lovely garden for a miserable cabin off the principal street, the only lodging they could find in Glencarran. They moved on the first of February. “We never thought to see that flitting,” said the neighbours, who looked on with real regret and commiseration.

Their troubles dated from the day they moved into the new house. Work was slack, and Joe could get no employment. It was true he had laid by something while he was in constant work ; but it was not much, and was soon spent in buying food and firing. Then dark, dreary days came on, when he and Mary and the children suffered from cold and scanty food.

A severe frost set in that February, and

lasted till well on in the following month. The frost was succeeded by piercing winds, the house was very damp, and Joe caught a heavy cold, ending in a cough which he could not shake off, accompanied by a painful languor and frequent pain in the chest.

Mary knew he needed nourishment of various kinds which she could not procure him. If Mr Johnson had been at home, she knew Joe would have been well attended to ; but his son, a clergyman in the south of Ireland, had come to Glencarran and taken him back with him, thinking he needed rest and change ; and the curate did not yet know very much about the circumstances of the people.

Many a day, that cold spring, did Joe crouch shivering over his wretched fire, quite unable to work, now that there was plenty of work to be done, and so many of the farmers able and willing to employ him.

He and Mary bore up bravely under this sharp trial of their faith ; but they found it necessary to remind one another very often, "that all things work together for good to them that

love God." And the hearts of these poor people were filled with the love of God. They had little of this world's goods, but they had what is better—a treasure laid up in heaven.

My dear readers, have you laid up any treasure there? O, I should so like to think you have! You will probably be always poor in this life; but that is really of little consequence if you have a claim to the eternal inheritance.

All this time Philip Black seemed to be prospering. He had got Joe's old place, of head ploughman on Mr White's farm. He felt no remorse then for having made poor Joe lose his situation; that was to come by and by. The Fosters had arrived at feeling charitably towards him (through the grace of God); but the time was to come when they "would heap coals of fire on his head."

The neighbours were very kind to Joe. Sometimes Jamie would make his appearance, bringing a small basket of turf, or a few fish; sometimes the women of the village brought a jug of milk, an orange, or perhaps a candle, when Mary had to sit up with Joe. Then, as the sick man

became worse, and Mary was worn out attending to him, Ellen Diver, Mrs Flemming, or Elizabeth MacPherson, sat up with him by turns, in order that she might get a little sleep.

One night Joe was very weak and low; he had just fallen asleep after an unusually restless day, and Mary and Elizabeth sat by the fire, talking in a subdued tone. Tears fell fast from Mary's eyes.

"He's worse," she said, "than he's been yet; sometimes I think he'll not get up again."

"You must keep up a good heart, Mary, dear. It will never do to let him see you so hopeless. Joe has been bad with that cough before now, and he got the better of it."

"Ay, but he had better attendance then; times were better, and his mind was easy. The fretting has done him more harm than anything else. Poor Joe! he has been a kind man to me; we have been very happy together."

"Ay, Mary, there's many rich and great people haven't had as much happiness as you."

"You see I never vexed him that I could help. Joe's not just as strong as he looks, and these

colds he takes every winter are sore on him. So I always said to mysel' that I mightna have him very long, and I'd be kind with him ; for I couldna thole to have any hank in my mind if he was taken away from me. Thank God, I was never cross to Joe that I mind. O, if it would please God to raise him up again!"

"Well, Mary, there's a kinder, wiser love nor yours watching over him—there's the Keeper of Israel, that neither slumbers nor sleeps."





CHAPTER VI.

CHANGES.



UT Joe did not die. When the mild weather came in he grew a little better; although his improvement was so slow, that Mary was often sadly discouraged.

They owed thirty-five shillings at the shop for things they could not possibly have done without ; and the debt, a heavy one for them, made them very anxious, as the time when they might hope to pay it seemed so distant.

After much thought, Mary made up her mind to pawn certain things she could do without—

her wedding dress and bonnet, and some little silver ornaments which had been given her by her mistress.

She parted with them one by one, till she had only her pretty bonnet left. She had worn it very little; and the white ribbons and blue flowers were still fresh. Mary stood with it in her hand a long time before she went out; she was thinking how her dear Miss Clara's wasted hands had made the trimming, and fastened on the flowers.

"Joe," said she at last, "Miss Clara wouldna blame me for parting with it, if she could look down on us and see our need—maybe she does know it."

"Surely no, Mary. Those that rest in heaven know no trouble for themselves or others. 'They shall hunger no more,'" he continued in the weak low tone which had become habitual to him. "'They shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more; neither shall the sun light on them, nor any heat. For the Lamb, which is in the midst of the throne, shall feed them, and shall lead them unto living fountains of waters;

and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes.' There will be no cold either, Mary ;" and poor Joe gave a shiver as he drew Mary's old shawl closer round him.

Mary turned hastily away, that he might not see the fear and pain which his last words had brought into her face. He so often spoke now as if he were wearying for the heavenly rest.

Mary returned in an hour with tea and sugar, and a few pounds of fresh meat, as well as a supply of tobacco. She knew how much comfort Joe always found in his pipe ; and she would far rather do without her dinner any day than let him do without his smoke.

"There, dear," she exclaimed, "we'll not starve for a wee while, anyway."

The weeks went by, and Joe was still delicate, and there was nothing more to pawn. The neighbours were as kind as they could be, but they were poor themselves.

"We must leave our case in the Lord's hands now, Mary," said Joe. "'He knoweth that we have need of all these things ; and the very hairs of our heads are all numbered.' We have asked

Him to give us our daily bread ; and I am right sure that He will not let us perish for want of it."

"*Are* you so sure, Joe ?" asked Jamie, who was in the house at the time.

"Ay, Jamie, man, He is a good Master. Sure 'the young lions do lack and suffer hunger ; but they that fear the Lord shall not want any good thing.' Only let us trust His word—we must do that. I have just been asking Him to send us some means of support, and I believe He'll do it."

Soon after the arrival of the post next morning, there was a knock at Joe's door, and a letter was handed to him.

It was from his elder brother Samuel, who had gone to America years ago, and of whom nothing had been heard since he left Ireland. Joe received one letter from him, written on his way out ; but, never hearing again, he believed him to be dead. The letter contained ten pounds.

Joe read how his brother had struggled with poverty for several years after landing in America,

lasted till well on in the following month. The frost was succeeded by piercing winds, the house was very damp, and Joe caught a heavy cold, ending in a cough which he could not shake off, accompanied by a painful languor and frequent pain in the chest.

Mary knew he needed nourishment of various kinds which she could not procure him. If Mr Johnson had been at home, she knew Joe would have been well attended to ; but his son, a clergyman in the south of Ireland, had come to Glencarran and taken him back with him, thinking he needed rest and change ; and the curate did not yet know very much about the circumstances of the people.

Many a day, that cold spring, did Joe crouch shivering over his wretched fire, quite unable to work, now that there was plenty of work to be done, and so many of the farmers able and willing to employ him.

He and Mary bore up bravely under this sharp trial of their faith ; but they found it necessary to remind one another very often, "that all things work together for good to them that

but had worked his way on by perseverance and industry, till he saved money enough to rent a farm at some distance from Philadelphia. He was doing well, and was able to lay by something every year. He wrote that he had a bad illness in winter; and when death was staring him in the face, his brother came so often into his mind, that he resolved to write to him, if he were spared to get well again.

He begged Joe to write immediately, and tell him if he were married and had children, and whether he would come to America, if the passage money was sent for him and his family. He said Joe could help him on the farm; and he would be glad to see him, and would make him as comfortable as he could. He was lonely now, for his wife was dead; and his youngest daughter, Martha, was the only one of his five children left to him. If Joe thought well of his proposal, and wrote to say so, he promised to send the passage money at once.

Joe and Mary did not get the letter read just at first, they were in such delight with the timely relief it brought them. "Thank God!" was the

first thing each said as the crushing weight of anxiety rolled away.

"You can get back your dress and bonnet, Mary."

"And you shall have wine and meat to strengthen you, Joe ; and I shall be able to pay my debt to the shop !"

No one knew, not even Joe, how great trouble Mary's debt had caused her.

"How glad Jamie will be ! Send Jenny to bid him come over at breakfast-time."

Jamie was heartily rejoiced to hear of his friend's good fortune.

"Now, Jamie, do we serve a good Master or no ? Is He worthy of our trust ?" asked Joe.

"Ay, Joe, He is worthy of trust. I wouldna have believed that if I'd seen it in a book. Anyway, you both may believe that verse of the psalm you're always conning over, 'There shall be no want to them that fear Him.'"

"I trusted that He would make some way of relief for us, Jamie ; but I never thought on this way. My brother Samuel, that I thought was lying in his grave this many a long year, and

whom I never expected to see till we met in heaven, has sent for me to go out to him in America. He says he'll do for us, and gi'e us a hearty welcome."

"Will you go?"

"I think so, Jamie; but we must take time to make up our minds. Do you allow us to go?"

"Ay, Joe, I canna bid you stay. God go with you wherever you go!"

Six months ago they would have dismissed the idea of leaving Glencarran from their minds at once; but all was changed now. The distress they had lately suffered would always be associated with the dear village in their memory, so they gladly turned to the thought of beginning a new life in a new home; and Joe wrote to his brother to say that he and Mary and the children would certainly go if he were so good as to send for them.

Mr Johnson came home in the end of May, looking much stronger; and his happy people trusted that their friend and guide would be spared to them for some time still.

He was sadly grieved to hear of all that Joe

and Mary had gone through ; but was displeased with them for not having written to tell him of their distress. He thought they could not do better than go out to Samuel. The voyage might be good for Joe, and, altogether, he thought they would not be justified in throwing so good an offer away.





CHAPTER VII.

THE PESTILENCE.



LENCARRAN was electrified by rumours that fever had got into the village. One of the young Harts was seriously ill, and so was Alick Flemming ; but the doctor would not say at first what was the matter with them, though his grave looks showed that he thought badly of their cases. Some days passed, and he told the people that he feared they had got fever of the worst kind among them, and warned them to keep out of the infected houses.

A stranger visiting Glencarran might have

supposed the people to belong to one large family, so general was the gloom cast by Hart and Flemming's illness. As far as the latter was concerned, the doctor's caution was in no-wise observed; for the house was crowded at all hours of the day by neighbours come to inquire for him, or to offer their services in his behalf.

"Do you know what I have just heard, Mary?" cried Joe, coming into the house abruptly; "Philip Black has got the fever. He has been lying, it seems, since Saturday, and no one would have taken a thought about him if Sally MacPherson hadna chanced to pass by the house and heard him moaning. She called the doctor in to see him, and he says he's far worse than the others;—indeed Alick's in the way of mending to-day. He and Hart have plenty of friends and well-wishers; but I hear no word about poor Phil. There he is, lying quite alone in the house, and he'll die if nobody looks after him."

"Well, Joe, dear, whose fault is it that he has no friend?"

"I canna let him die alone," continued Joe, without answering Mary's question. "Sure, sure, you wouldna allow me to do it, dear? Last month I thought I was going to die, and you know what sore days and nights I had to bear; but our situations were quite different, for I had my good wife to attend to me, and he hasna one friend or neighbour to reach him a drink of water—not one that cares enough about him to do as small a kindness as that. It's true, he has himself to blame for it; but some way, Mary, since I rose from that bed I look at things in another way from what I did before; and—and I'm away to see after Phil!"

"Stop a little, Joe!" cried Mary. "Let me go; you're not strong enough yet, and it's a woman's work."

"No, Mary, it's my work. No one in the world has the right to it that I have; you mustna try to stop me."

He bade the little ones goodbye, told Mary to take care of herself, and left the house, taking a few shillings of Samuel's present with him, for he thought it probable he should find Philip's

dwelling bare of everything an invalid was likely to require.

Philip was in a raging fever, and tossed from side to side in dreadful pain. His ravings were terrible to hear. The words he sometimes gave utterance to both shocked and grieved Joe. God's holy name was often spoken in his frenzy; having been wont to take it in vain while in health, he did not respect it, now that sickness had stolen away his reason.

But conscience was at work too. During the long nights, while Joe sat by him wetting his lips, or smoothing his pillow, he often heard his own name. Poor Phil seemed to think that Joe was dead, and that he had murdered him. He talked incessantly about having got him turned out of his good house and place by telling lies about him to Mr White.

Those were melancholy nights. Joe was not strong enough to undergo such excitement and fatigue without injury, but he was sustained by feeling he was doing the duty God would have him do. Dr Williams came regularly. At first he had no hope whatever of Philip's recovery;

but the crisis was now past, and he said he might be brought round with care. "But, Foster, if he does get well, he will owe his life, under God, to your good nursing."

Joe dreaded the time when Philip should awake in his full senses and recognise him.

It was night, and he stood at the fire lighting a candle, when Philip opened his eyes. He heard his name spoken in a tone of the most entire surprise, then silence. Some minutes after, Joe handed him a drink, and he looked very hard at him while he took the tin from his hand.

"It's not possible!" he murmured; "no, it canna be Joe Foster." (In a louder tone) "Is that you?"

"It is, Phil; are you any better?"

"Philip made no answer. At length he said, "I must be wavering still, I think; but if it is really you, Joseph Foster, you are the last man in Glencarran ought to help me."

"Why so, Phil?"

"Why? do you ask me why? Because I told the master that you lamed the chestnut

with a kick ; and, what's more, I told other lies about you, and lost you your good place."

"O, Philip, what made you do it?"

"I hated you since that day you told about the parcel ; and I didna care what happened you. You shouldna have come near me. Leave me, Joseph ! Leave me to die alone !"

"You'll not die, Philip ; you'll live to repent, and lead a new life in the fear of God."

"Have you just come in, Joe ? and what is it ails me?"

"You've had the fever, but you are mending, and I have been with you these few days past."

"Dinna say so, man ! O, dinna tell me you've been here so long !" cried Philip, in a state of the greatest excitement, "you that should have treated me as I treated you !"

"No, no, Philip ; if I could have done that, I'd ha' been no true servant of the Lord Jesus Christ. But lie you down again quiet ; I've the doctor's orders not to let you talk."

Philip lay still, and seemed very thoughtful. Next morning, when Joe came near him, he caught his hand and exclaimed, "I wish it was

all to do over again, Joe, and I'd treat you very differently."

They are happy who have a future before them in which (as far as their fellow-mortals are concerned) they may repair the faults of the past—they who have done cruel deeds, or spoken cruel words, yet have injured one still with them, for they have the opportunity to gratify him in the future perhaps as much as they have pained him in the past; they may weep away their remorse, and gentle memories may efface the memory of the wrong they have done; but how deeply must we pity those who remember pain given and injury done, yet cannot ask forgiveness; for the life that should grant the pardon, and the ears that should hear it asked, are in the grave!

Philip Black's sulky, ungracious manner had prevented his ever making a friend. It was not likely that he would ever quite get rid of it; but it was much less disagreeable than it used to be, and Joe could not but wonder at the change in him; he had become gentle, and seemed grateful for the little services he was constantly rendering

him. He was not inclined to talk, but lay perfectly silent for hours at a time, with a grave, troubled look, that made Joe think he was reviewing his past life.

Truly, there was but little to please him in the retrospect—few kind thoughts, pleasant words, or self-denying deeds. A selfish life must be a miserable one.

Are you anxious about your own lot—weighed down by some sorrow anticipated or remembered? the very best way to get the better of it will be to throw yourself heartily into the cares and sorrows of your neighbours. Habit will make it easy for you to sympathise with them; and you will learn, while helping to bear their burden, how much you have for which you have reason to thank God.

“But Philip had never sympathised with any one in his life; and it was long before he could understand what made Joe, of all people, so kind to him.

One night Joe was reading to himself at the fire, and Phil listened to him turning over the leaves.

"What are you reading, Joe?"

"I am reading my Bible, Philip."

"You used always to be singing hymns while you were at work; do you mind any of them?"

"But you didna like to hear me singing them."

"No, neither I did. You made me wild going over them so often; but I have no objections to them now, so I would like if you would say some o' them. Don't sing, for my head canna bear it."

Joe was not slow to avail himself of this permission, and from that time he always read a little to Phil in the evening. Philip also consented to see Mr Johnson; and he was so attracted by the old clergyman's courteous, gentle manner, that he begged him to pay him another visit.





CHAPTER VIII.

THE DEPARTURE.



T now only wanted a few weeks of the time when Joe and Mary must leave Glencarran. They were very busy about their preparations, getting their clothes together, and selling their small possessions in the way of furniture. As the parting drew near, they began to dread it very much. The Flemmings, Harts, and MacPhersons were grieved at the prospect of losing them; even Jamie, so little wont to be cast down by anything, now appeared grave and sad.

It came. The last Sunday in the little church, where they had so long listened to the Gospel message, where they had vowed before God to love one another till death ; the last lesson from Mr Johnson's lips ; the last walk round the churchyard where Joe's father and mother were buried. And then good-bye.

Oh, my friends, think of the time when there will be no more last meetings and good-byes !

The villagers showed their goodwill in various ways. Philip Black brought them a large ham for their sea-store. Indeed they were in no danger of starving on the voyage, so many pounds of tea and sugar and other good things came pouring in.

Philip softened more on saying farewell than Joe had imagined it possible he could do.

"You are going," he said, "and I canna make you any amends for the wrong I did you."

"Ay, Phil, you can make me the very best amends."

"How, Joe?"

"By attending the church regularly, and reading a chapter in your Bible every night. Do

that, Philip, and you'll be pleasing me better nor you'd do if you were to fill my cap with gold. Will you promise?"

Philip's heart was touched; he held out his hand to Joe, and replied very gravely and earnestly, "I will."

They went to take leave of Mr Johnson last of all. He took them into his study, the scene of many and many a touching interview, and there he besought God's blessing upon their voyage.

"You will go on with your sowing, Joe, will you not?"

"Ay, sir, I hope so, as long as life lasts."

"You have reason to sow with good courage, for your Master has greatly blessed your work here."

"Oh, sir, it was so poor—so little."

"All our best efforts, Joe, are poor and little; but let us work on in our Lord's strength, and bless Him for deigning to use such wretched instruments. Perhaps James MacPherson and Philip Black may be scattering the good seed widely when you are gone."

"I wish I had done more for the neighbours, sir." Here poor Joe broke down completely.

"My lad, remember that all nations are dear to our blessed Lord. Though you leave Glencarran, you do not leave your work; for wherever you may be, you will be surrounded by that great family for whom Christ died. There is plenty of work, noble work, lofty work for all."

The worst was over. Joe and Mary stood on the deck of the "Caroline," with several hundred other emigrants, and they were passing Glencarran. A great crowd of the villagers were on the cliffs to see the vessel pass. Their loud shout was answered by cheers as loud and long from those on board, and the stately ship sailed by with her freight of hoping, regretting, fearing hearts.

Our friends in the "Caroline" gazed as long as their old home was in sight. On they sailed past the white houses of their little village, past the church, past the glebe; and then they turned away as men turn from the grave of a friend,

for they knew that the parting was for ever as regarded earth. But they had one another still, and cheering hopes to lure them across the Atlantic.

And their neighbours left the cliffs and went home again. Many of them had a painful sense of loss ; they missed their companions for a time in the street and in the house, but by degrees they learned the necessary lesson how to live without them.

Change, change everywhere ! No one can have arrived at years of reflection without having been impressed by the insecurity of all things here below. There is just one thing that cannot fail us,—the love of Christ. If we are His believing people, we may be certain that He has “portioned out our lot” in the best way for each of us ; and no pain, or want, or sorrow, is without its wise mission. But His love is shown most of all in these very changes which oppress us so painfully. He knows that, if we could be sure of keeping even one friend, we should be contented with this life, and should never think of preparing for a better.

But let us remember with joy that we “seek a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God.” We are told many things about that happy place,—that there our tears shall be wiped away,—that no pain can enter, no hunger, no thirst,—that we shall be satisfied with pleasures provided for us by our God ; but there are times in the lives of all, when none of the promises give such comfort as this one, “They shall go no more out.”



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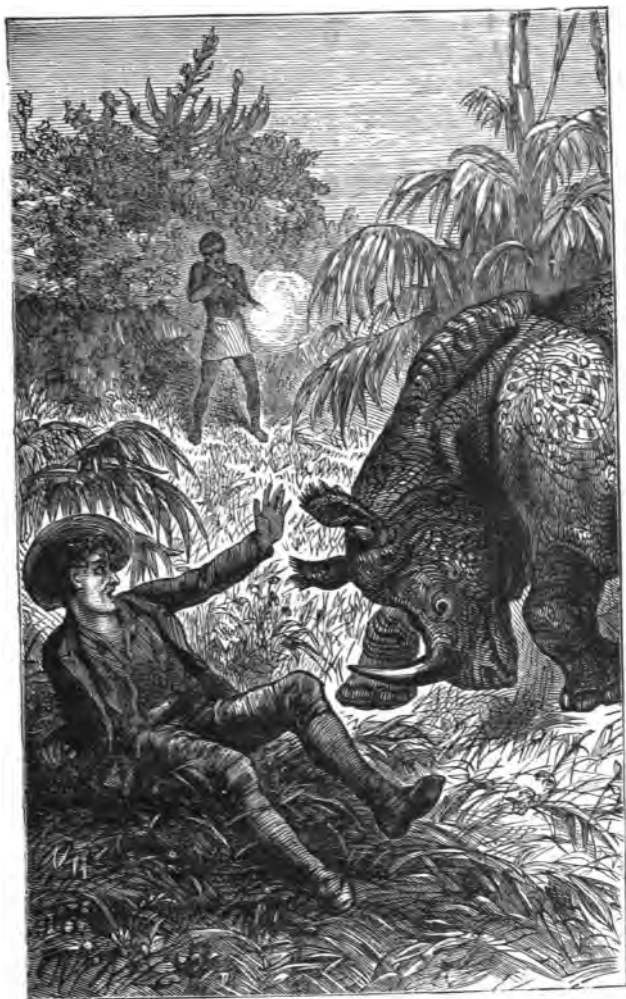
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